



Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2016
English
Original: French

Letter dated 8 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition, Najib Ghadbian, dated 8 March 2016 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alexis Lamek
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



**Annex to the letter dated 8 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed
to the President of the Security Council**

[Original: English]

On behalf of the High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and as requested by the General Coordinator of that Committee, Riad Hijab, it is my honour to transmit to you as an enclosure to this letter a letter from Mr. Hijab dated 7 March 2016, in which he discusses the violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria.

(Signed) **Najib Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian National Coalition
to the United Nations

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic]

The High Negotiations Committee of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces strongly denounces the fact that killings have continued in Syria since the truce came into effect. We wish to draw attention to the recent escalation of hostilities by Assad regime forces, Iranian forces, the sectarian militia associated with them and the air force of the Russian Federation in all residential areas of Syria. Those actions are a direct violation of Security Council resolution 2268 (2016) and the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria.

Since the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities came into effect in Syria, more than 100 deaths have been recorded. Most of the victims were civilians. The Russian air force violated the Terms less than 24 hours after they came into effect, heavily bombarding opposition-held areas and deliberately targeting civilians and units of the Free Syrian Army that are party to the agreement. Among those killed by Russian Federation forces was a pregnant woman in Jisr al-Shughur, who died on 28 February after Russian Federation planes dropped cluster munitions on residential areas. Courageous rescue workers of the Syrian Civil Defence have been wounded in attacks by the Assad regime and its allied militia, and 20 children have been killed, according to data collected by the Violations Documentation Centre in Syria. The summary provides a full overview of documented violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities.

The Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities obligate the Assad regime forces, their Iranian allies, the militia associated with them and the air force of the Russian Federation to cease attacks with any weapons, including aerial bombardments, against the armed opposition groups. Yet since the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities came into effect, the Assad regime and Russian forces have carried out more than 100 air strikes across 50 areas controlled by armed opposition units party to the Terms. Indiscriminate weapons, including barrel bombs, cluster munitions, thermobaric weapons and other dumb bombs, have repeatedly been deployed in opposition-held areas where neither Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) nor the Nusrah Front are present, contrary to the allegations made by Russia in order to justify its savage bombardment and killing of civilians and Free Syrian Army units, which are parties to the agreement and have abided by it.

According to reports, dozens of Free Syrian Army members were killed in the first week after the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities came into effect. The air strikes and attacks of the Assad regime and the Russian Federation forces did not affect areas under the control of ISIL. They focused instead on opposition-held areas in Idlib, Homs, Aleppo, Dar'a, Ladhikiyah and Rif Dimashq.

The Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities require that all parties refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire. The Assad regime has refused to comply, continuing its perfidious efforts to make territorial advances east of Damascus, in Ladhikiyah and the in countrysides of Aleppo and Hama.

The Assad regime has continued to kill civilians and deny humanitarian aid to those in need. In direct violation of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities and a series of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions and 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2209 (2015), 2254 (2015) and 2258 (2015), the Assad regime continues to

use starvation and siege as weapons to kill civilians, something that amounts to a war crime. It denies millions of Syrians urgently needed access to food and medicine in a calculated effort to starve Syrian civilians into submission. As a result, more than one million people remain trapped in besieged areas in several Syrian regions, despite Member States' clear mandate to deliver aid irrespective of the Syrian regime's agreement.

The High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces therefore calls on Member States to:

- (i) Condemn the repeated and systematic violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities by Assad regime forces, Iranian forces, the sectarian militia associated with them and the air force of the Russian Federation, including their deliberate efforts to target and kill opposition units party to the agreement, their indiscriminate attacks on civilians, their deliberate denial of humanitarian aid, and their efforts to acquire new territory;
- (ii) Demand a mechanism for the objective, neutral, and transparent monitoring, verification and enforcement of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities in order to ensure that the Russian Federation does not exploit the situation to cover up its daily war crimes against Syrian people;
- (iii) Stipulate clear consequences for violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities, including measures to protect civilians from indiscriminate air strikes;
- (iv) Lift the sieges on all Syrian cities, towns, and villages where civilians, in particular women and children, are suffering from a severe shortage of food and medical supplies and are in mortal peril owing to the lengthy siege imposed on them by regime forces and their foreign sectarian militia allies; and, where necessary, air-drop aid to besieged communities.

The repeated, systematic and deliberate violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities committed by the Assad forces, Iranian forces, the sectarian militia associated with them and the air force of the Russian Federation risk undermining the truce and efforts to achieve a political solution in Syria. By continuing to violate the agreement, the regime and the Russian Federation clearly seek to make any progress in the political process impossible.

The Syrian opposition has steadfastly sought to implement the truce agreement in good faith. We continue to work to bring about a political solution to the Syrian crisis in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, which provides for the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers. Such a solution would require Bashar al-Assad to leave as soon as that body is established and have no role in the future of Syria.

It is clear, however, that a political solution cannot be reached so long as the Assad regime and its Russian ally continue to kill civilians indiscriminately.

The Security Council has the capacity and the mandate to stop this systematic killing. We do not believe that anyone would want you to leave it too late.

(Signed) Riad Hijab
General Coordinator, High Negotiations Committee

Summary of violations of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities committed between 27 February and 7 March

In the first 10 days of the Terms for the Cessation of Hostilities, over 190 documented violations took place. There are reports that Assad regime forces and Russian aircraft deployed cluster munitions, barrel bombs and thermobaric weapons. Those indiscriminate attacks resulted in at least 100 deaths. Most of the victims were civilians.

Only 24 hours after the agreement came into effect, the forces of Assad and Russia bombarded moderate opposition areas in Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, Ladhqiyyah and Rif Dimashq, killing at least 40 members of the Free Syrian Army. In that same time, a mere handful of ISIL terrorists were killed. Attacks on civilians and moderate opposition forces continued, as did the Assad regime's efforts to acquire territory: the Syrian regime attempted to make advances in Ladhqiyyah and the countryside north of Aleppo.

The following are some examples of recorded violations that have been documented by the Violations Documentation Centre, the Syrian Civil Defence, the Syrian Network for Human Rights and moderate armed groups on the ground:

- There were over 100 documented instances of air strikes, shelling, shootings and mortar fire attacks by Assad regime and Russian forces, resulting in at least 100 deaths.
- Most of the casualties of the Russian and Assad regime attacks were civilians, including eight women and 20 children.
- Banned weapons, including cluster munitions, barrel bombs and thermobaric weapons, continued to be used in civilian areas. There are unconfirmed reports of chemical weapons use in the eastern Ghutah.
- More than 90 homes were damaged or destroyed as a result of Syrian regime and Russian Federation attacks on civilian areas.
- Russian and Assad regime attacks focused on areas that are not held by ISIL, including Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, Ladhqiyyah and Rif Dimashq.
- Air strikes accounted for 50 per cent of all victims killed by the Assad regime and Russia.
- Air strikes were wildly indiscriminate, with civilians accounting for 98 per cent of the victims.
- People in besieged and hard-to-reach areas died from starvation and lack of medical care.
- More than 10 of those who were detained died under torture in the prisons of the Assad regime.